(e) It has been the effort of BSNL management to give best possible service to its customers. Hence the question of lack of motivation on part of BSNL management does not arise.

Panchayats without telephone connectivity

*238. SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Panchayats in the country without telephone connectivity; and

(b) the steps taken to provide telephone facility to all the Panchayats in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMED): (a) As on 30.9.2005, there are 8,960 Panchayats in the country where none of the villages coming under these Panchayats have telephone connectivity. This excludes panchayats lying in deep forest/naxalite infested areas etc.

(b) Following steps are being taken to provide telecom facility in all villages in the country with support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF):

(i) Village Public Telephones (VPTs) are to be provided in all the remaining 66,822 uncovered villages excluding villages having population less than 100, lying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc. These VPTs will be provided in a time bound manner by November 2007. Out of the above, 13,078 villages have been provided VPTs till 30.9.2005.

(ii) Rural Community Phones (RCPs) are to be provided in 46,253 villages with population more than 2000 and not having a PCO. These RCPs wil be provided in a time bound manner by September 2007. 15,946 RCPs have been provided till 30.9.2005.

(iii) Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) are likely to be provided on demand in 1,685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs) by first quarter of the year 2006.